

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF  
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 554.—VOL. XI.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 1894.

PRICE 1½d.

## THE VIS INERTIÆ.

GENTILITY has been described as the art of doing nothing elegantly: any idle boy or girl, man or woman, may 'lop about' and do nothing all day long with ease, but not with elegance. If not untidy in themselves—an exceptional case—how quickly an idle person will disarrange a whole roomful of furniture! Every chair and couch and ottoman has been requisitioned in turn; curtains thrust aside and tumbled; books left gaping, a cap here, slippers there, a pipe in the inkstand, a tobacco pouch among the flowers, newspapers everywhere but in the rack—'work' on the table, the materials for it on the floor. In short, there is no article for which the idle will not find a use—except the use for which it was originally designed.

But to be idle genteelly, elegantly—to give one's self up with grace and self-possession to the steady and serious contemplation of doing nothing—this requires, at least in one of English blood, some training. Without possessing the dignity of Spanish innate indolence, or French *insouciance*, or the delightful *dolce far niente* of the Italian, the Briton, ere he can be idle altogether, to his own satisfaction, needs a motive, a disguise, an excuse. To compose and consume cigarettes; to swing a rocking-chair; to tease a puppy or a kitten; to turn everything upside down hunting for something which, when found, is not wanted—all these things are good so far as they go. To have a letter to write, and to be all day going to write it; a book to be read, and almost turn a leaf in an hour; a piece of work to be completed, and to drop it every other minute—these also give the idle person genuine contentment; they exhale the breath of employment without fatigue, and cover a secret sense of languid enjoyment with the garment of an imaginary industry.

But to be idle, thoroughly, completely, and comfortably, as well as genteelly and elegantly

idle, your average English man or woman requires but one thing, and his or her fortune is made: let them but be, or be thought to be, in delicate health, and their lives are saved, so to speak; henceforth, they may indulge their inclinations to do nothing gracefully and elegantly to the end of the chapter.

'Dear Dick's health is so delicate,' says the fond mother, gazing commiseratingly into dear Dick's face as he enters the breakfast-room about noon, fresh from twelve or thirteen hours of repose, the last three of which have been, possibly, disturbed by the casual perusal of a newspaper or a novel. Certainly, dear Dick looks bored, but whether by hidden constitutional delicacy or open maternal sympathy, who shall say?

'I always prefer that Ada should take her breakfast in bed; it is so necessary that she should husband what little strength she has.' And Ada has not the least objection to indulging herself by remaining prostrate while the business of the morning is transacted, and to come out of her room with a duly delicate appearance by the time 'mother' has got through the burden and heat of the day. And so, partly because she thinks Ada needs 'care,' and partly because she likes to indulge herself in the luxury of keeping her child still dependent upon her, this goes on until some luckless wight falls in love with Ada's delicacy and sweet helplessness. By that time the proverbial light-heeled mother has made her daughter heavy-heeled; and, unless the parents' blood should wake up at the call of children's voices, dear helpless Ada will make but a lame recruit in the battle of life.

Idleness plays many parts. There are the constitutionally indolent—those who, like Dr Johnson, are *never*, physically, ready to get up in the morning, but who, like him, are possessed of a conscience, which compels them, now and again, to face the reflection of what they have—compared with what they might have—done, and to stand aghast at the

comparison. There are those whom circumstances have made idle: riches; absence of motive for exertion; ill-health, real or fancied; indulgent friends, and much more often by self-indulgence. That idleness is one of the seven deadly sins gives them no sort of concern; it is of the essence of their complaint to have no feeling of their own infirmity. They are asleep; they cannot tell their dreams, for they do not even know that they are dreaming. Giving up, nerveless relaxation, has become a habit, and to them—as to the immortal Mr Toots, though from a different motive—nothing is of any consequence. But whereas it was his own convenience, his own feelings, his own comfort, that never were of consequence to the unselfish Toots, it is precisely your convenience, your feelings, your comfort that are—to the idle man—of no consequence. Floating idly about on ‘the great Pacific Ocean of Indolence,’ he makes first one compromise, then another, with self-respect, until he ends by sacrificing the esteem of his fellow-men on the private altar of his own sloth. His affairs get first muddled, then embarrassed, then decaying, then desperate; and he feebly flatters himself with an idea of repose, now that all is gone.

It is of no consequence to him that he has impoverished his relations, and brought his wife—who brought him money as well as goodwill, who has borne him children and borne with him for a quarter of a century—it is of no consequence to him that he has brought her and them to poverty. His round, unalterably good-humoured face, his stolidly philosophical bearing, his placid equanimity, proclaim him a true Lotos-eater. To him, it is always afternoon. Why should he toil? Let what is broken remain so: let him alone. He is one of that ill-used race of men who ask only remission from labour. Unfortunately for this Lotos-eater, lotos are not indigenous in the British Isles. He cannot or will not dig; to beg he is not ashamed, only—it is too much trouble. His table is furnished; he scarcely knows, and not at all cares, how, or by whom, son or daughter, wife or brother, friend or stranger—it is all one to him. His friends have long ago given up all thoughts of *his* working—have given in to the power of the Vis Inertiae of which he is so prodigious an example. Like the birds of the air, though he neither sows nor reaps, far less stores up for the future, yet he is fed and clothed; and is seldom, moreover, without a coin in his pocket.

As in the ant-world there is a race of idlers so inveterately helpless that should their voluntary—nurses desert them, they would die of their own incapacity to provide food for themselves; so, among men, there is scarcely a community without its idle members, to whom the industrious minister, for whom they toil and deny themselves, in order to prolong for their parasites their long day of rest and dreamful ease. That idleness should have been long considered ‘the badge of Gentry’—we all remember the servant who warranted her mistress ‘quite a lady’ because ‘she never put her hand to nothing’—and that this notion still survives unconsciously in many minds, is per-

haps one reason why the idle are so long endured: that they have in all probability sunk in the social scale, and still preserve some traces of the gentility to which they were born, is another. They are living paradoxes. They eat bread unsweetened by toil, and do not find it disagrees with them. They sleep the sleep of the just, and never dream of unfulfilled duties. They somehow manage to escape the universal doom; while those about them earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, these are only concerned in the consumption of it, and never turn a hair in its production. Lean in mind if plump of person, incorrigibly idle, and imperturbably good-tempered, they peacefully bring their preposterous careers to a conclusion, and the story of it reads like a satire upon careful industry.

Granting true weight to the evils of the Vis Inertiae, acknowledging its power to blast in the bud every high and noble design, and to stand, a stumbling-block, in the path of every beneficent or self-denying action, we must not shut our eyes to its absolute merits: to its indispensable benefits, its recuperative efficacy, its actual pleasures. To those harassed by worry, to those jaded by long and monotonous toil, a rest is as necessary as sleep after prolonged exertion. ‘Oh pleasant land of idleness!’ where thought has leisure to feel its own poetry—where care is cast aside in luxurious quietude—where weariness lapses first into a pleasant lassitude, then, as the spirit renews itself, becomes braced with fresh life and vigour—where the memory even of toil fades away, and where the bitterest grief has its best chance of alleviation. Nature is ever ready to stand our friend, but we must have time to make her acquaintance before she can heal us. How can the solemn beauty of a summer midnight soften and still a heart too work-wearied to have regard to it? or how can the breeze from ‘the green hills growing dark around us’ freshen and purify the jaded mind and body that lack time to inhale it? But when there comes a pause—when we leave ‘doing’ for a while—when the panting wheel ceases its customary revolutions, and the shackles of labour are loosened, then, and not till then, do we experience the true regenerating excellence of rest.

## THE LAWYER'S SECRET.\*

### CHAPTER VII.—SOME VULGAR GOSSIP.

ON arriving in London, Matthew Fane went straight to his master's office, and opened the outer door with a latchkey. Passing through the clerks' room, and through the solicitor's private office, he knocked at the door of a room beyond. This was a dining-room. Mr Felix found it convenient to live in rooms adjoining his office; and custom made him prefer that arrangement to any other. His bedroom and a boxroom, with a small kitchen, lay beyond, having an independent entrance to the outer staircase.

Receiving no reply to his knock, Fane gently turned the handle of the dining-room door, and

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entered. The gas was lit, but turned down. The clerk stood for a moment in uncertainty. There was light enough for him to see the different articles of furniture, all of them old-fashioned, heavy, and solid; but his gaze was fixed on a small safe, used by Mr Felix for his own private papers, which stood in one corner of the room. He moved softly towards the writing-table which stood near the fireplace, but even as he did so, he heard a slight sound from the bedroom. He had taken it for granted that his master was out, as it was Mr Felix's invariable custom, when he had shut himself up for the night, to secure the outer door of the office by a chain.

Fane suddenly stood still when he found that he was not alone, and then he crossed the room and knocked at the bedroom door.

'Come in!' called out the solicitor.

Fane went in, and found his master in bed.

'I have just returned from Woodhurst, sir,' he said. 'I thought you were out just now. Hope there's not much the matter with you, sir?'

'Oh, nothing. Only I am a little out of sorts.—You sealed up the cabinets, drawers, and so on?'

'Yes, sir. And what I came back to-night for was to deliver a message from Lady Boldon. She sent for me, and told me particularly to say to you that she was sorry you could not go down to-day, but she would expect you without fail on Tuesday, the funeral being on Wednesday.'

Mr Felix received the message in silence. 'Ladies always imagine that no business but their own is of any importance,' he said after a pause. 'It would do quite as well to go down on Wednesday morning; but I suppose her ladyship must be humoured. You had better drop her a note—or telegraph; that will be better. Say—"Mr Felix slightly indisposed, but will be at Roby Chase on Tuesday evening without fail."'

Fane turned away to despatch the message. 'Can I get you anything, sir?' he asked, as he left the room.

'No; Mrs Bird will be here in an hour,' said Mr Felix.

Mrs Bird was the person who acted as house-keeper and cook to the solitary man.

Fane despatched the telegram to Lady Boldon, and then, feeling rather tired, went home to his lodgings. These lodgings he shared with Daniel O'Leary; and, somewhat to his surprise, he found O'Leary extended at full length on the horse-hair sofa which graced one side of their joint sitting-room.

'How's this, Danny?' said the old man. 'It's seldom you're at home of a Saturday night.'

'No coin to-night,' said the youth laconically. '—I say,' he added after a pause, 'where have you been this afternoon?'

'Oh, I've been in the country. Been sealing up the desks, et cætera, of an old gentleman who's dead.'

'The same that you engrossed a will for the other day? Sir what's-his-name—Sir Richard Boldon?'

'The same,' said Matthew, as he set about preparing his tea.

'My word!' exclaimed the young man, sitting bolt upright, 'what a pity for our guv'nor that Sir R. left all his property away from his widow if she married again!'

Matthew's hand stopped in the act of placing a teacup on the table, and stared at his nephew in surprise. 'Bad for him? What d'you mean?'

'Why, he's in love with Lady Boldon—that's all. Head over ears—at his age, too!' Mr O'Leary laced his fingers behind his head—a head that was covered with brilliant red hair, cut as short as a barber could be persuaded to cut it—threw himself back again on the sofa, and chuckled.

'Nonsense! You don't know any such thing. You don't know anything at all about it,' remarked his uncle.

'Don't I? Trust me to find out our old man's little weaknesses. That was her—that was Lady Boldon he brought to the office one day, wasn't it? when you sent me out of the way to serve a bloomin' writ, or something? I thought it was. A fine woman. I admire the old gentleman's taste.'

'But how do you know he's in love with her?'

'Because he's got a photograph of her in the drawer of his writing-table, and he steals a peep at it, when he thinks he won't be interrupted. I've caught 'im at it. And I've got a look at the photo too. I wonder if she gave it 'im, or if he cribbed it? Shouldn't wonder if he took it out of the halbum at the house when he was on a visit. 'E's capable of it.'

'But, Dan, if you're right, he may as well give up all hopes of the lady; for it's not likely she would marry him and lose a fine estate like Roby.'

'I don't know about his giving up hope,' said Dan sententiously. 'When our guv'nor makes up his mind to a thing, he generally gets it.'

'Do you know what I would do, if I were in the guv'nor's shoes?' asked O'Leary, after a pause.

'You'd ask her to marry you; and she'd have you, my son, if it were for nothing but your good looks and your fine manners,' said the old man sarcastically.

'I'd quietly pop the new will into the fire, and say to the widow: "Now, you have me, and we'll enjoy all the property together."'

Matthew leant back in his chair, and regarded his nephew with a contemptuous air. 'Would you?' he said. 'And what about the witnesses to the will?'

'Oh, I'd square the witnesses,' replied the youth, with an airy smile.

'If the heir-at-law, or the next-of-kin, whoever they may be, got to hear of it, you'd find yourself in Queer Street, Danny.—And take you care you don't get there yet, young man.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said O'Leary angrily.

'Don't you? I checked the petty cash-book this morning, and I couldn't make it balance anyhow.'

'Oh, that's all right; I'll put that straight by the end of the month, and so long as it's right then, what's the odds?—But I say,' he broke off, anxious to change the subject—'did you see the lady when you were down there to-day?'

'Yes, I did. She is a very agreeable, nice woman,' said Mr Fane with an air of patronage. 'She gave me a message'—He stopped short. 'To old Felix? Out with it, uncle.'

'These things are confidential, Danny.'

'Oh yes! And what have I been telling you? That was confidential too, I s'pose; only you didn't remember it then. Catch me telling you anything I notice about Felix another time, that's all.'

'How should you care to know? Besides, it was nothing—only to tell Mr Felix to be sure and come down the evening before the funeral. He made me wire her that he would be up to time.'

'Ain't they thick enough?' said this objectionable young man with a grin. 'If I were that heir-at-law, I'd look out that they didn't cut me out between them. Who is he? Oh, I remember. His name was in the will. Something Boldon; and he was of Something Lane in the City of London, gentleman. That means he's a broker, or a commission agent, I suppose. Well, 'e'll stay a broker or a commission agent, I've a fancy, will or no will. Precious hard on Lady Boldon, to give up everything to *him* if she marries our poor old guv'nor. Is he worth it, uncle? Hardly, I should say.'

'Mind your own affairs, Dan,' said Matthew, who was tired of the young gentleman's refined conversation. 'Why don't you go to hear the new Lion Comique?'

'Told you I had no coin,' said Dan sulkily.

'I'll lend you a trifle, if that's all, and deduct it when I pay you the month's screw. I do like a little peace and quietness sometimes. But don't you go spinning it on a table. You'll get into trouble yet, Dan, if you go on with that game.'

'Don't grieve for me,' said the young gentleman, rising with alacrity from the sofa, and pocketing the shillings which his uncle handed to him. 'I can take care of Number One. Never fear.'

And in a few seconds Matthew Fane was left to his own meditations.

#### CHAPTER VIII.—TEMPTED.

Mr Felix was not seriously ill. He found himself quite well enough to go down to Roby Chase on the following Tuesday. On arriving at the little station at Woodhurst, Mr Felix noticed the Rector pacing up and down the platform with quick, agitated steps, and he went aside to greet Mr Bruce, whom, of course, he knew.

'I see the brougham from Roby Chase is waiting for me,' said the lawyer, when the ordinary greetings had been exchanged; 'can I have the pleasure of setting you down anywhere?'

'I—thank you—I hardly think so,' answered the Rector, 'unless you can wait ten minutes

—until the up-train comes in. The fact is, I want to see the last of poor Lynd, my curate, you know.'

'To see the last of him? Are you parting with him, then?' asked Felix, following the direction of the Rector's eyes with his own.

'That's him,' said Mr Bruce, guiding the solicitor's eye, as it were, with his look—'that tall spare man in clerical dress, standing at the door of the waiting-room. Yes, poor fellow, I'm obliged to part with him, much against my will. The fact is'—here the Rector's voice sank to a whisper—'he has been more or less cracked for some time, and lately he has shown such marked symptoms of being deranged, that I telegraphed for his brother—that gentleman who is talking to him now. That thick-set man standing near is in reality a keeper. They are taking him to an asylum now.'

'Indeed!' said the lawyer, while his eyes rested on the curate's spare form with unusual interest, and he murmured a few words of conventional sorrow for the misfortune that had fallen on him. 'I suppose,' he added, 'your connection with him will now be quite at an end?'

'Oh, dear, yes. We shall never see him again; and, upon my word,' continued the parson, wiping his forehead, 'it's a comfort to know that it is so. There have been such delays about signing the certificate, and so on; and really I haven't had one moment's peace for thinking what the poor fellow might do next.—Look at this letter I had from him this morning—plainly the letter of a madman.' As he spoke, Mr Bruce took a letter from his pocket, and handed it to the lawyer.

Mr Felix read it attentively; and as he did so, a thought which had been hovering near his mind, as it were, for some days, came back to him with tenfold force. He drove it away, and it came back, a second, a third time; while his eyes still remained fixed on the outspread sheet before him, and the hand which held it slightly trembled.

'I must go and talk to Mr Lynd now,' said the Rector nervously. 'I don't wish to seem impolite to him, or to his brother.—Wait for me—that is, if you don't mind waiting five minutes longer—and I'll drive over to the Chase with you;—and he walked off, forgetting that he had left Mr Lynd's letter in the lawyer's hand.'

Mr Felix did not mind waiting. He paced the platform, deep in thought, never raising his eyes from the ground, except to glance now and then at the little group of gentlemen at the waiting-room door.

On his arrival at the Chase, Mr Felix dined alone; and during dinner he received a message from Lady Boldon, asking him when it would be convenient for him to go up-stairs.

'Tell Lady Boldon, with my compliments, that I have two or three letters to write for the night-mail, and then I shall be quite at her ladyship's service.'

After dinner, Mr Felix went up-stairs for a small despatch-box which he always carried about with him, and having brought it down to the library, he remained at work there for nearly an hour. At the end of that time his



letters were finished. He went back to the dining-room, poured himself out a glass of port, drank it, and then filled the glass a second time.

The lawyer knew that he would need to have all his wits about him in the coming interview; but he also knew that there was something he would need more than cunning, and that was—courage. Having drunk the wine, he rang the bell, and told the servant to let Lady Boldon know that he was ready to see her.

'I had orders to take you up-stairs as soon as you were at liberty, sir,' was the answer; and the lawyer followed the man to Lady Boldon's boudoir. He was almost startled by the appearance that the widow presented, her white, rigid face with its great dark eyes, shining, as it were, out of the black garments in which she clad. Her beauty seemed more chastened, more severe than before; yet it was even more fascinating. Mr Felix's heart beat wildly as he took the lady's outstretched hand: he hardly dared to look her in the face.

Lady Boldon was the first to break the silence. 'What have you to tell me?' she said.

The lawyer kept his eyes on the ground, and made no reply.

'Has it been done? Has that cruel, that fraudulent will been made?'

'I am sorry to say it has,' said Mr Felix in so low a tone that the words were barely audible.

'Give it to me,' cried the lady, stretching out her hand.

The lawyer shrank back. 'I dare not,' he said.

'Have you it with you here? Yes; I see you have. Well—let me see it.'

Mr Felix rose, drew a bulky document from his breast-pocket, opened it, and spread it out on a small table which stood close to Lady Boldon's chair. The lawyer stood beside her as she leant over it, and read it through—read it from the first line to the signatures of A. Felix and Stephen Lynd as witnesses.

It was not a long document, or difficult of comprehension. By it practically the whole of Sir Richard's property passed to trustees on trust to hold it for the testator's widow so long as she should remain unmarried; and from the time of her second marriage, in trust for the testator's nephew, Frederick Boldon.

'The injustice of this'—began Lady Boldon, and she stopped, unable to go on.

'I quite agree with you,' said Mr Felix. 'It is flagrantly unjust, considering what was said at the Rectory before the marriage.'

'Can nothing be done? Must I submit to this?'

The lawyer was silent.

'Is it necessary to produce this will at once?' asked Lady Boldon, a flush rising to her face as she spoke.

'Delay could do no good. It ought to be produced now, if at all.'

The lady started, and looked inquiringly at the solicitor.

'I mean, that if this will is not read to-

morrow morning, it need never be read at all.'

'I—I—don't understand you,' said Lady Boldon. 'What do you mean?'

'Only this, that if I choose, I can render the will inoperative.'

'Oh!'

For a moment Lady Boldon thought that the lawyer intended, as he did intend, to convey that he might possibly consent to suppress the will; but she at once rejected the idea as too preposterous. In the third part of a second, Mr Felix saw that the crime of destroying the will was not in Lady Boldon's thoughts. But he also saw that she was anxious to get it set aside, even in an irregular way. Her eyes gleamed with an anticipation of triumph, as she bent forward saying eagerly: 'Oh! will you do so?'

The lawyer's eyes fell on the ground. 'I will—on one condition.'

'What is it?' cried the lady eagerly. She still imagined that the solicitor had in his mind some legal quibble, or some irregularity in the document which rendered, or might render, it invalid.

'It is not easy for me to refer to that at this moment, so soon after your husband's death,' said Mr Felix in a very low tone. 'Yet it is best to be frank, is it not? And time presses. We must make our decision to-night. The truth is, then, Lady Boldon, I will do what you ask if you consent that one day you will take me for your husband.'

'Sir!' Lady Boldon involuntarily rose to her feet, her eyes positively blazing with indignation. She calmed herself with an effort, resumed her seat, and said without any trace of anger in her tone: 'Mr Felix, I can only suppose that you have for the time taken leave of your senses. Be good enough to leave the room.'

In spite of her apparent calmness, Lady Boldon was trembling with suppressed feeling—trembling from head to foot. Her contemptuous air hardened the lawyer, and gave him courage. 'You had better hear me out,' he said coolly. 'To-morrow, it may be too late.—Now, please, understand that on no other condition will I stir hand or foot'—

'I do not want you to do anything. I will consult some other solicitor,' said Lady Boldon coldly.

'Very well,' retorted the lawyer, in a tone as cold as her own. 'Only, I tell you this, if you do so, on the morning when you cease to be Lady Boldon, you leave Roby Chase for ever; and your income, instead of being six or seven thousand a year, will be a bare three hundred.—I, and I alone, can prevent that.'

'Is the will illegal, then, in some way?'

'Excuse me. I had rather not answer questions. All I want to say is this—If you refuse to give me the promise I require, the new will must be read to-morrow, immediately after the funeral; and in that case nothing can hinder its taking effect, if you marry a second time. But if you grant my condition, you will never see or hear of this new will again.'

'Why? How? Do you mean?—You do not mean that you would dare to destroy it?'

The lady's voice sank to a whisper, and her cheek blanched as she asked the question.

But the lawyer's ready laugh re-assured her. 'Destroy it? Certainly not. But, pray, don't ask any more questions.'

Lady Boldon sat still, her rapid intellect searching this way and that for a way out of her difficulty, without finding one; and Mr Felix, naturally supposing that she was engaged in considering his proposal, continued to press his suit.

'Listen, I beg of you, Lady Boldon,' he said. 'I am not a young man; though I am considerably younger than your—than my late client. No one could say that a match between us was in any way singular. You would lose nothing. I am anxious to impress that upon you; you should have the spending of your income, every penny of it. And I have loved you, as I think woman never was loved before, ever since—never mind how long. I love you more than my life. My life? What is that to me without you? I love you more than my honour.'

'For shame, Mr Felix, to use such words to me under this roof, and on this night!'

The lawyer looked at his companion; and for the moment he almost felt as if he hated her, and hated her more than he had loved her. But the next instant his anger had given way. A change had come into her face. Her eyes grew soft, almost pitiful, and the indignant blush faded from her cheek. 'But, surely, Mr Felix,' she said gently, leaning towards him once more, 'surely it could not be any pleasure to you to marry a woman that did not love you?—Ah! you do not know what a loveless marriage is! For your own sake, put this mad fancy out of your head.'

'Fancy? A mad fancy? It is the very life and soul, and at the same time the curse, of my existence. And you speak of putting it from me, as if it were a child's desire for a new toy! No; I cannot give up the hope of winning you. It is my very life.'

'And I cannot consent to your ridiculous proposals, Mr Felix,' retorted Lady Boldon. 'Better remain a widow than marry a person whom I despise.'

He started at the word; and his companion was not slow to notice it.

'Think, Mr Felix! How can one avoid despising a man who takes such means to force a woman to marry him?'

He set his teeth, and made no reply.

Lady Boldon rose to terminate the interview, outwardly calm, but inwardly a prey to the bitterest disappointment. The splendid prize for which she had sacrificed so much, and suffered so much, was slipping from her grasp. Something at that moment whispered, as it were, in her ear: 'Decide nothing to-night. Wait until to-morrow. Something may happen before then. Do not throw away Roby Chase in a hurry.' So aloud she said—'I cannot talk any more to-night; but if you like, I will see you in the morning.—Oh, you are cruel—cruel!'

'You will not think me cruel afterwards—if you marry me,' said the lawyer thoughtlessly.

This calm assumption that her opposition would break down, exasperated Lady Boldon.

'Can't you see,' she flashed out, 'that you are taking the surest way in the world to make me detest you? Your love is an insult.—But enough for to-night. The funeral is at eleven. I shall be here, in this room, at ten; and I will give you my answer then.'

Mr Felix did not utter a word. He bowed, and left her. But when the door had closed behind him, a fierce smile crossed his face. An experience of forty years had taught him the truth of the adage that she who hesitates is lost.

#### SECRET SOCIETIES AND SECRET TRIBUNALS.

THOUGH many Societies claim to be of earlier origin, the Order of Knights Templar is the first one of which the date of foundation is known. They were not, it is true, strictly speaking, a Secret Society; but they are as fully entitled to that term as the Freemasons, the Rosicrucians, the Illuminati, or any other. They had mysterious rites of initiation, badges and lodges; they were, in fact, the real source from which Freemasonry sprang. Their rise and history are too well known to need detailed description. Founded in 1119, they were originally an order of military monks, having for their aim the redemption of the Holy Sepulchre, and taking the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—vows which, as was inevitable, became null and void when the order grew in numbers and in power. At the height of their splendour they possessed no fewer than nine thousand 'commanderies' or districts; their annual income was £4,448,000, a gigantic sum in those days; they numbered 30,000 members; their fleet held command of the Levant; they were by far the best soldiers in Europe. Small wonder was it that they practically held the destinies of the world in their hands, and that the Princes of Europe became alarmed at their power, for the time seemed not far distant when the cross-hilted swords should strike the sceptres from their hands, and the gay embroidered escutcheons go down before the pied banner *Beauséant*.

Their extermination was a necessity. The Grand Master was arrested, the lodges were broken up, and the knights thrown into prison. The most absurd charges were preferred against them—blasphemy, devil-worship, trampling on the very cross for which they had shed their heart's blood, adoration of an idol called Baphomet. No accusation was too madly extravagant, no crime too horribly unnatural, to impute to the unfortunate Templars. One, and one only, real charge was urged against them—namely, that they had defied the authority of the Pope. That they were luxurious, and even vicious, is true, but no more so than any other powerful and wealthy body of men would have been under the circumstances; that their initiatory rites were secret and fantastic, is certain; but that any sane men would have held the orgies ascribed to them is utterly incredible. In 1314, the Grand Master and the Grand Preceptor were put to death, and the Knights Templar ceased to exist as an order. With them perished the last vestiges of the real chivalry.

Contemporary with the Templars was the famous Syrian sect of the Assassins. Their name describes them. The band was founded by Hassan-ibn-Sabbah, the 'Old Man of the Mountain,' and consisted of himself and his dupes. They were a mere band of fanatical murderers, without political or religious excuse. It was the custom of Hassan to inveigle young men, stupefied by hashish (whence the name 'assassin,' or *hashishin*), into a garden formed after the description of the Moslem Paradise. Here the novice was allowed to remain for some time; he was then stupefied and brought before the Master, who bade him go forth and do his bidding; promising that if he were obedient, he should enjoy the Paradise, of which he had had a foretaste, for ever. The Assassins are said to have numbered forty thousand men, and European Princes leagued with them. After the death of Hassan, internal dissension arose, and finally they were exterminated by the Mongols in 1256.

In pleasant contrast to the grim realism and fierce barbarity of the middle ages are the Troubadours and Minnesingers, most graceful and poetic of conspirators. That they were heretics and plotters, is true; but they were heretics only to the fierce rancour of the Inquisition; and they plotted only against the gloomy tyranny of feudal France, wandering over Europe, preaching the canons of the Joyous Science, the religion and cult of Love, as mysteriously sweet as their own 'Romaunt of the Rose.' They were in some measure a secret society, for they had grips and passwords, and they held 'courts of love,' ostensibly for the settlement of affairs of gallantry. But harmless though they were, the restless suspicion of Rome was upon them; they had sung songs derisive of the Pope, above all in the 'langue d'oc,' 'the language of heretics;' they were in league with the Albigenses. They perished with their unhappy allies beneath the iron heel of the father of Simon de Montfort.

Indeed, it seemed at that time as if the joy of life had perished with them; the Inquisition had fleshed its young claws in their destruction; the shadowy forms of the 'Vehmgerichte' and the 'Beati Paoli' begin to loom awfully upon the political vision. Europe is inundated with spies, assassins, agents of chicane, bravoës, informers, secret stabbers; from Italy come poison-rings, poisoned gloves, Venetian daggers, invisible inks. The torture chamber now became the antechamber of the law-court, much ingenuity being expended on the furnishing of it; the 'peine forte et dure' was a recognised preliminary to the judicial examination. The Inquisition is undoubtedly the most widely known of the three secret tribunals, as it was the most universally powerful; but the Vehmgerichte was equally powerful within its jurisdiction.

The Holy Inquisition was established in 1208 by Pope Innocent III. in Languedoc, for the suppression of the Albigenses and Troubadours, as above stated. From its establishment in Spain five-and-twenty years later, it rapidly spread all over the Continent. It gave the death-blow to the Knights Templar; in 1481 it drove the Jews out of Spain. At this time

the famous Torquemada was Grand Inquisitor. He was a short, stout man, little suggestive in appearance of a bigot. It is possible that his ravages are exaggerated; but even when we allow for error in this respect, the number of persons who were put to death under his inquisitorialship is enormous. His harshness was so unbending and his punishments so rigorous, that he was several times obliged to account for his conduct to the Pope. Throughout the long, bloody record of the Santa Hermandad, there is no trace of any redeeming action. It was established to root out heresy, and with terrible earnestness it did its work. The Inquisition was omnipresent: it followed in the wake of the Conquistadores into Peru and Mexico; it descended upon the unhappy Netherlands in the van of the Duke of Alva. In the reign of Philip II. the Inquisition reached the summit of its power, for it had become a recognised Spanish institution, and the people were no more shocked at an *auto da fé* than at a bull-fight. But with the growth of civilisation the Inquisition declined. It continued to linger on, but it was only a shadow; and when the soldiers of Napoleon entered the inquisitorial prison, they found few prisoners to liberate. The rack and wheel had grown rusty, the cords and pulleys were rotting on the beam. Poe's horrible nightmare tale of the torture by the pendulum is centuries behind its time; the pendulum was there, but the knife was blunt and dull, and the mechanism was broken and useless. An attempt was made to re-establish the Inquisition in 1814, and many persons were imprisoned; but the time for even the mumery of persecution was past. The people broke out into revolt, burnt the prisons, and drove away the familiars. In 1820 the Holy Inquisition was blotted out.

Widely different from the Inquisition in every respect was the Vehmgerichte or Holy Vehm. This tribunal was formed in Westphalia towards the close of the thirteenth century for the punishment of those who were too powerful to be brought before the ordinary law-court. It was very similar in origin to the English Star Chamber. The state of Germany at this time was utterly anarchic; the title of ruler of the Holy Roman Empire was an empty dignity; the land was filled with marauding 'lanzknechten' out of employ, with savage barons who were nothing more or less than robbers, with bishops who ravaged their dioceses. The Vehmgerichte was the only institution in Germany which had the power of enforcing order; as it was secret, it could neither be bribed nor terrorised. Its authority was very great; it even summoned the Emperor to appear before its free courts, who, though he did not obey the summons, dared not resent the indignity. Though it was never formally abolished till 1811, when the last vestige of it was declared legally non-existent by a decree of Napoleon, it gradually lost its authority as the necessity for it ceased.

A description of its constitution and procedure may be of interest. There were three degrees among its members: the chief were the 'Stuhlherren,' or lord justices; the next were 'Schöppen,' or sheriffs; the lowest, 'Frohn-

boten,' or messengers. There were secret signs and pass-words, and traitors were invariably put to death. An accused person was summoned to appear before the 'free court;' he was cited three times, intervals of six weeks being allowed to elapse between the citations. If he failed to appear, he was condemned *in contumaciam*. If, however, he appeared, he was permitted to bring thirty witnesses, and was allowed the privilege of legal advocacy and advice, and even the right of appeal to the higher court. The extreme punishment was death by hanging; and it is probable that torture was employed to extort evidence from unwilling witnesses, though, of course, this was only in accordance with the usual judicial procedure of the time.

Identical with the Holy Vehm in constitution and aim was the Beati Paoli, a Sicilian society. Of these, very little is known. They were a popular secret society, and much dreaded. Their existence was first discovered in 1185, and they existed down to the commencement of the present century. Though not so powerful or so great as the Vehmgerichte, they exerted a considerable influence upon Sicily and South Italy.

After the Company of Troubadours, the most attractive secret society is certainly that of the Rosicrucians, or the Society of the Rosy Cross. It was theirs to invest the debased art of alchemy with a fantastic charm, none the less graceful because it was unreal. They were very closely connected with the Troubadours, holding the 'Romaunt of the Rose' as the epic of their order. Their professed aim was the restoration of the 'sciences'—that is, alchemy and astrology—to their true spheres. Their tenets and ceremonies were of the most graceful and poetical description, very different from the stern Vehm code and the crude mummery of other secret societies. Their beliefs were worthy of their general character. Boldly and unreservedly, they denied the grotesque horrors of monkish theology—there was no witchcraft or sorcery; incubus and succubus had no existence; the unseen world was peopled, not with horned devils and dismal spectres, but with beautiful spirits, loving mankind. It is to them that we owe nearly all the folklore of ancient Germany—of the gnomes which toil in the mines, of the legend of Undine, of the sylphs which inhabit the air. The sect spread into Scotland and Sweden and throughout all Europe. It gradually became merged in the craft of Freemasons.

An article giving an account of the principal secret societies would be incomplete without some mention of the Illuminati, a sect which attracted a great deal of attention, and to which, as to the Nihilists of to-day, a very exaggerated influence and power was attributed. It was founded by a student, Adam Weishaupt, in 1776, and had political and educational aims. Space does not permit us to give the long list of degrees and classes into which the Illuminati were divided. There were three main stages—Nursery, Masonry, and Mysteries, which were again divided and subdivided. The members assumed the names of various ancients; Weishaupt, for instance, called himself Spartacus.

The statutes and instructions of the order were discovered after its suppression in 1786, and give evidence of considerable knowledge of mankind, being written much after the style of Machiavelli's 'Prince.' There was probably no society which attracted so much attention with so little reason at the time: mention is made of it in nearly all contemporary works.

To give an account, or even the briefest details, of one-half of all the secret societies known would be impossible. The majority had political aims, as the Carbonari in Italy, who existed from time immemorial down to the commencement of the present century, directed against Papal tyranny; in Germany was the Tugendbund, against Napoleon; others were mere hordes of robbers, as the Chauffeurs in France, and the Garduna in Spain. The various Irish secret societies are too well known to need specification. There were many semi-religious societies, as the Swedenborgians, and Asiatic societies without number.

The dawn of the last decade of the nineteenth century sees the extinction of the last remnants of any true secret society; they have become obsolete, unnecessary, ineffective. As for any modern so-called 'secret society,' it is a curiosity; its place is in the museum, together with the rust-eaten thumb screws and tarnished symbols. They are as harmless and as useless as these. The only two conspicuous modern societies with any semblance of activity are the Nihilists and the Clan-na-Gael. Neither of them has ever done anything towards the accomplishment of their object beyond a few isolated and useless murders and one or two mock-revolutions. They are now lethargic, in a death-stupor. The dawn of the twentieth century will see the close of their inglorious records.

## A DAUGHTER OF THE KING.

### CHAPTER II.

IN the ravine the utmost consternation had prevailed when the girl had so suddenly ridden away. Captain Jackson declared he should not consider himself safe for another hour now. Only Larry maintained a firm faith in the girl. 'She will come back with food,' he said.

And he was right. Towards sunset, a shadow suddenly appeared at the entrance to the ravine. The mustang had halted, and the girl had slipped from his back before the startled soldiers realised that Hialulu had returned.

'I knew you would come again!' burst from Larry triumphantly.

'Did you?'—glancing at him, as she untied a bundle from the horse's back and threw it down. 'Why not have lighted a fire, then?'

'Jove! I never thought of it'—looking up the ravine, as if in amazement that one had not lighted itself. 'I really felt quite confident you would come back, though.'

'I believe you. And you alone, perhaps'—surveying the others in a cold, cursory manner.



Their silence confirmed her suspicions. Then she walked up the long, narrow ravine, collecting any lichens and bits of stick, in which Larry at once joined her; whilst the Major and Captain lay and watched her, and wondered what the difference was between her walk and that of an Englishwoman.

When sufficient materials had been collected for a fire, Hialulu left Larry to light it whilst she went to unpack the provisions. By-and-by, turning from completing this, she beheld that gentleman lying flat on the floor, blowing a pile of smoking stuff, whose intention was evidently anything but that of lighting. Seemingly the girl possessed some sense of humour. For the first time a quick smile passed over her face, banishing the stern gloom, and rendering it for the moment radiantly lovely. Going up to the prostrate Lieutenant and kneeling down by the smoking mass, Hialulu proceeded to investigate. Larry had placed a pile of lichen, lighted it, and then arranged the sticks carefully all over it after the manner of planking a floor, leaving no possible loophole for a flame to creep through.

'Did you ever light a fire before?' she inquired gravely.

'Er—no. I think my mother forgot to teach me to light a fire.'

'Evidently.'

Larry sat contentedly on the ground, and watched her rebuild the fire. 'What sort of wood do you call that?'—indicating the thin brown twigs she was picking up.

'Kono.'

'Oh. I thought they were pine-twigs.'

'Perhaps you do call them that.'

'I see. That's your name for them. I think your names are much prettier.'

'No; you don't.'

Larry jumped as much as his sitting posture would allow. Then his lips curled suspiciously, but he repressed the laugh, meekly remarking: 'Er—I meant—I thought I did.'

Miss Martineau evidently considered this ended the conversation, for she vouchsafed no further reply. In a moment or so, however, she observed: 'You go and get some of the flesh I brought, so that we can cook.'

Lieutenant Larry entertained a strong suspicion that she had been laughing; but he could not be quite sure. He rose, however, and went to obey her commands. He found she had brought a considerable quantity of partly dried flesh, and a number of large corn and rice meal cakes. He carried back some of the flesh, and together they began to cook.

The girl preserved a strict silence; but several times Larry saw the firm lips relax as he chatted and cooked away with equal vigour, in no wise disconcerted by her silence.

She sat some distance off whilst the men eagerly ate the unexpected supper. Soon after

it was over, she curtly announced her intention of leaving them.

'You'll come again, won't you?' asked Captain Jackson eagerly.

'Time will show.'

'Will you tell us if we are in danger of visits from the Indians?' inquired Major Littleton.

She answered him more courteously. 'No. You can sleep in safety. There are now no moving Indians within twenty miles of you.'

'Twenty miles!' echoed Larry. 'What are they all doing, then?'

'They have all joined Waunema by now.'

'Waunema? Oh yes, of course. But Waunema's after—Where are the English soldiers, then?'

'They are falling back on Fort Hunter.'

'Holy Moses!' groaned Larry, as he realised all that meant. And his groan was echoed by the others.

'How far are they from us now then, do you think, Miss Martineau?'

'Anywhere within fifty and seventy miles.—But don't call me that, please. It sounds like mockery. Just call me Lulu'—gravely. And so saying, Lulu beckoned to the patient horse, and followed by him, left the cave.

Some time in each of the following days Lulu came, bringing various kinds of food; and often game of her own killing. She seemed an absolutely fearless being, roaming far and wide. She could tell them the exact movements of the English soldiery, giving precise reasons for those movements; but concerning the movements of the Indian hordes, Lulu maintained a stubborn silence.

She talked more freely to Larry as the days went on, seeming to be rather partial to him; and she was very gentle and courteous to the Major, constantly cooking little delicacies to tempt his failing appetite.

It soon became evident, though, that the exposure and swamp humours would make short work of these men. They grew paler and weaker each day, and more languid. They all recognised this fact, and accepted the knowledge in divers ways. The Major was quiet and resigned; Larry preserved a steady cheerfulness, in accordance with certain principles of his own; and the Captain groaned and grumbled incessantly, in accordance also with his method of doing things, and much to the disgust and contempt of Hialulu.

'We're simply dying by inches,' he complained.

'It would have been much more merciful to have killed us at the commencement.'

'Not at all,' contradicted Larry stoutly.

'Whilst there's life there's hope, I say. I don't believe God is keeping us alive just to torture us.'

Lulu's hand was on the horse's back, but she paused in her spring. 'Well said, and as a brave soldier. Your life is worth saving; for you are like a ray of sunshine among men.'

'Thank you;' and Larry raised his cap.

'It must have been Providence sent you,' said the Major. 'So we should not complain.'

'Perhaps it is your Providence has kept my doings for you undiscovered all this time,' remarked Lulu with a smile. 'My father's Indian

servants are quick to observe; and if he had but a suspicion, he would shoot me; and then, of course, your food must cease. Every night when I enter the—his home—I look for a bullet; but it has not come. Yet, if some day you do not see me, you may guess it has. And Lulu sprung on the mustang's back and vanished.

One day she brought them an extra supply of food; and then the next day she did not come at all. The men wondered in vain; they had not the least clue as to the motive for her actions. That she had not intended to come that day, they could tell from her having brought them the extra food. Captain Jackson suggested that she had wearied of the trouble and risk of keeping them supplied, and that she did not mean to come again; but Larry indignantly maintained a sturdy faith in the beautiful and inexplicable being, to whom, in the first hour of her appearance, his hot young love had been secretly given.

In reality, before dawn that morning, the object of their various surmises was steadily riding onwards, away from them, over great grassy plains. Her face wore its usual expression of immovable decision, but the brown eyes had a look of brooding trouble. Now and again she had to urge on the willing but tired mustang. It had been a much longer ride than she had expected—much longer; and she had been tired before. Ah, well, it could not be so long now.

In the early morning, the English sentry was utterly amazed to see a frothing horse gallop up, from which slipped a tall, slight girl in a broad straw hat. Before he could say anything, she addressed him in the cool manner so peculiarly her own: 'I want to see your Colonel.'

'We don't let strangers inside our lines—miss,' said the man; 'at least, not often.'

'You had better let me in, or you may have cause for sorrow'—calmly.

The man stared at her, and then sounded the signal for the picket guard.

Lulu leaned against her horse for a moment or so, until four or five men came up under a corporal. That gentleman asked innumerable questions; but being unable to elicit any information, or to satisfy his curiosity in the least possible way, and being told that she had something to tell his Colonel which he would be glad to hear, the corporal decided to conduct the strange visitor to his superior officer. Provided that officer decided to pass her along, he would then conduct her to Colonel Harcourt's headquarters.

Lulu had to undergo the ordeal—if, indeed, it was any ordeal to her—of being stared at by a fair, young man in a Major's uniform, whose curiosity was also immense to know what had brought this beautiful and strange girl to the camp at that hour of the morning. But all his questions were equally as vain as the corporal's.

'I have not ridden some sixty miles to beg on my knees to see this Colonel of yours, or to tell my history in full before being allowed to do so. If you don't mean to let me see him, say so; and the blame can rest

with you,' she said calmly, with a look of the utmost indifference on her handsome face.

'Will you tell me who you are, then?'

'No.'

'But what shall I say to the Colonel? They are having a conference in his tent; and I can't go to ask them to see some one, of whom and whose errand I can tell them literally nothing. Do give me even a message.'

'My message is that I want to see him—the Colonel.'

Seeing that further remonstrance was useless, the officer turned away, merely remarking: 'Well, I'll go and tell the Colonel. I only hope I shan't get blamed, that's all.'

Seeing that he really intended going, Lulu called him back. 'You may say, if you like, that I came about some of your officers.'

'Oh!' said the young man, brightening; 'I see. Thank you. Will you come with me, then, please?'

Unconcernedly, Lulu followed him up some rising ground, at the top of which was the Colonel's tent. Sounds of voices came from the interior of the tent, and as they reached the door, the officer who accompanied her said apologetically: 'I shall have to ask you to wait here a second, whilst I go and ask the Colonel to see you.'

Lulu nodded, and turned her back on the too curious sentry as she set herself to wait. In a second the Major lifted the curtain of the tent again, and beckoned her to enter. He held the curtain for her as she passed through, and then passed out himself.

Lulu found herself in a tent with four officers, who all surveyed her with the utmost curiosity and interest. She looked in no wise conscious of their scrutiny, but with one rapid glance scanned each face. Instinctively she recognised the Colonel from among them—the man sitting opposite her, with the searching gray eyes and wavy brown hair. The other three officers were younger men. Seeing that she had singled him out, and expected him to speak, Colonel Harcourt spoke in a somewhat formal tone: 'Will you be seated?'

'I had rather stand,' came the equally formal answer.

'Major Lewis informs us that you are able to give us information concerning our missing officers. Is that so?'

'It is'—laconically.

Perceiving that the girl did not mean giving any information that was not considered worth the asking, the Colonel went on in a more courteous voice: 'Will you be good enough to tell us what you know, then—where they are?'

'In Skeleton Gulch, on the north side of Mauna's shoulder, at the head of Dead Swamp.'

'The Dead Swamp!' repeated the Colonel. 'Why, that is—how far off?'

'Under seventy miles.'

'Heavens! And have you come from there now—in one ride?'

'I have.'

'Then you must be very tired. Won't you sit down?'

'It is the mustang that will want to sit down, not I'—tersely.

The officers laughed; and then one of the younger ones rose and placed a chair quite close to her side. With a word of thanks, Lulu sat down and leaned her tired back against the chair. Her face was quite white; and despite her scorn of any such idea, the very tones of her voice betrayed weariness.

'What on earth are we to do, I wonder?' said Colonel Harcourt, addressing his companions, and then letting his eyes wander back to the beautiful, stern face opposite him.

'I don't know; it's such an awful way off.'

'If you like to send horses and men for them, I'll guide them to the Gulch,' observed Lulu.

'But how shall we be sure that you are not a decoy to get our horses and men away from the camp?' queried the cautious Colonel.

A look of supreme contempt and disgust curled the girl's lips. 'You can be sure of nothing,' was the most uncompromising reply. 'You please yourself as to what you risk. It is optional, I suppose, whether you send or not; and the choice rests with you.'

'But I wonder they didn't give you some writing or message to—to give us perfect confidence,' ventured one of the other officers.

'They didn't, because they have no idea I have come,' rejoined Lulu, turning those restless brown eyes on to the speaker. In answer to the unspoken question, she went on: 'Because I thought a day's suspense would make them ill—more than they are; and I might fail, in which case, disappointment would intensify despair; therefore, I did not tell them I meant trying.'

'Will you tell us who you are?' inquired the first speaker.

'No; I see no necessity for doing so.'

'No necessity,' interposed Colonel Harcourt courteously. 'But as a favour.'

'Kate Martineau'—laconically.

'Kate Martineau!' repeated all the men in chorus.

'That should be an English name,' said the Colonel.

'It should.'

'Then you are not Indian?'

'No.'

'Nor Indian parents?'

'Nor Indian parents.'

'May I ask who your parents are?'

'My dead mother was Miss Sutton, daughter of Major Sutton of the Royal Artillery.'

'And your father?'

'Is Captain Martineau of the scarlet Lancers.'

'Not?—'

'Yes'—smiling for the first time.

The men stared at her in speechless amazement for a moment or two, then Colonel Harcourt rose.

'You are an English officer's daughter, then, and I shall have the greatest confidence in sending men under you.—You must have refreshments and a rest, Miss Martineau. Meanwhile, I will see to getting men ready for the expedition.'

The officers then left the tent, leaving Lulu to silence and rest.

They brought her refreshments, but she did not touch them. Was she so tired? Perhaps. Or perhaps those gloomy far-seeing eyes already discerned the shadows gathering on the future's dim wall.

Presently Colonel Harcourt re-entered the tent, and came and sat opposite her.

'You are not eating anything! Come, you must eat something. I am afraid you are overtired,' he said in his courteous tones, scrutinising her face with searching, gray eyes.

'What with?'

'Why, your long ride.'

'I take longer than that.'

'Do you? How?—I mean, for what purpose?'

'No particular purpose, as a rule. I spend the summer-time riding about.'

'Oh! And the winter? How do you spend that?'

'In reading, and various other ways.'

'Reading?' he repeated, thinking that explained the ease and refinement of her speech.

'You manage to get books, then?'

'The travellers that go to the big white cities bring them to me—and my father.'

'I am very sorry for your father,' went on the Colonel. 'He must have taken the—his misfortune very bitterly. Did he come here directly after it?'

'Yes. Before I was born.'

'Ah!—It is a great pity,' he remarked after a while. 'And it is a great shame that a girl like you should be buried up here amongst these savages. Don't you find your life insufferably dull and monotonous?'

'I have not noticed it—before,' she said, and then wondered what had prompted that last word.—'I am quite ready to start when your men are,' she told him by-and-by.

The Colonel rose, and stood looking down on the frail-looking figure of the girl. 'It does seem too much to ask; but you say you are not tired. You will come back with the men?'

'Yes. I won't leave off now till I have well finished.'

'Thank you. You must have one of our horses; for your mustang would never do the double journey again.'

'As you will. If all are lost, one horse more or less will not signify.'

The Colonel smiled, and left the tent. About ten minutes afterwards an orderly came to tell Miss Martineau that the Colonel's arrangements were finished. Lulu rose, and followed the man out of the tent and down the hill. Just outside the camp stood a group of men and horses waiting. The girl ran a quick, experienced eye over the men and horses, more especially the horses; and Colonel Harcourt saw she knew what she was undertaking. The horse that had been appointed for her was furnished with a bit and bridle, but no saddle.

'We have no side-saddle,' said the Colonel. 'You rode the mustang bare-backed, so I thought you would have this horse so.'

'Yes, I always ride them bare,' she replied in her laconic style.

She watched the men mount, noting the seat of each on his horse with a critical air. When

they were all mounted, she sprang on her own horse's back, and bowing her head in slight acknowledgment of the Colonel's parting wishes, rode off.

#### OUR BRITISH RING-SNAKES.

THERE is a widely spread notion that any small animal, especially if it be one that creeps upon the ground, must necessarily be too insignificant and uninteresting to be worthy of much attention; and very often this feeling of contempt, fostered by ignorance, assumes a more pronounced form, and becomes actual dislike, if not fear. This is particularly the case with regard to reptiles. Yet many reptiles are perfectly harmless, many—even noxious ones—are exceedingly useful, and the life-history of nearly all is full of strange and interesting facts, whilst legendary lore is rich in stories in which they play a conspicuous part. It would be no wasted time to study briefly the habits and structure of our British reptiles.

First let us note how few species we have in this island. Naturalists differ somewhat as to the animals which should be included under the heading 'Reptilia.' All agree that the Tortoises and Turtles, the Crocodiles and Alligators, the Lizards and the Serpents, are true reptiles; but while many declare that the Amphibia (the Toads, Newts, and Frogs) are also members of the family, others will not allow of their being included. In England, our reptiles consist of two species of snakes and three of lizards; and if the Amphibia are included, one, or possibly two, species of frogs, two of toads, and three or four of newts. Each of these has much that is of interest connected with it, but in this paper we shall deal briefly with only one of the snakes. Let us take the common Grass or Ring Snake, a very handsome, perfectly harmless, and easily tamed creature.

It may be well, before going farther, to explain why reptiles are termed 'cold-blooded,' as distinguished from mammals, which are warm-blooded, since many people do not seem to understand the reason for the distinction. The mammalian heart is divided into four chambers, two auricles and two ventricles. The blood which has circulated through the body, gathering up many impurities in its course, is carried by the veins into the right auricle, and passing thence into the corresponding ventricle, it is driven to the lungs, that it may be brought into contact with the air they contain, and so be purified. After undergoing this process of oxygenation, it returns to the heart, this time to the left auricle, flows into the left ventricle, and is driven away again through the body, pure and warm, for it acquires its heat while being oxygenated. Now, the heart

of a reptile has only three chambers, two auricles and one ventricle. The pure and impure (warm and cool) blood are therefore mixed together in the one ventricle, and this mixture is driven away partly to the lungs and partly to supply the body. It is obvious that this mixed blood cannot be so warm as the wholly purified blood contained in the arteries of a mammal, and animals whose hearts are constructed upon this principle are therefore called 'cold-blooded.'

The Grass-snake is found in most parts of the country, in some places being very plentiful indeed. It is a timid creature, always seeking to avoid an encounter with man. Its favourite haunt is a sunny bank, where it can bask undisturbed—or some quiet marshy meadow where it is able easily to obtain a meal of frogs, to which it is particularly partial. It sometimes enjoys a swim, too, and it is a pretty sight to see several of these animals swimming and diving together. They swim very rapidly, carrying their heads well above the surface, and using the whole of their bodies in the same way that a fish uses its tail. They are said to be able to catch both newts and frogs in the water. They eat newts, small birds, birds' eggs, &c.; but the favourite food is frogs. A curious sight it is to watch a snake pursue and dart upon a frog, and then swallow whole and alive a dainty morsel several times larger than its own head. When seized, the frog seems to be fascinated or benumbed; it seldom makes any violent effort to escape, only occasionally struggling or crying; and it remains apparently unconcerned and without suffering while it is gradually being swallowed. Its downward course can easily be traced, as the bulk of the snake is largely increased by its meal. Frogs have been heard to cry some little time after they have been completely swallowed, and many of them have been taken still alive out of the stomachs of snakes. A frog is usually caught by one of the hind-legs; presently, the other leg is incautiously placed too near the snake's mouth, and then it is seized in its turn, and the two legs are swallowed together. The body follows, enormously distending the snake's head, which flattens out and loses all semblance of shape as it gradually 'gets outside' the frog, reminding one of attempts to pull on a very tight kid glove—the fore-legs are turned forward and straightened out, the head disappears, and the toes (outstretched and sometimes feebly kicking) are the last that is seen of the poor frog. Sometimes the victim is seized by the head or side; in the latter case, the snake invariably manages, without losing its hold of the frog, to work it round until it catches it by the head, and then swallows it, head first. The whole performance is a most curious one to watch.

But how can a snake manage to get down its throat an animal which is far larger than its own head? Have you ever closely examined a human skull? If so, you will have noticed that the bones forming the upper part of the head are so closely knit together as to be



practically only one bone—that the lower jaw alone can be moved—that the two branches of the jaw are joined together in front, and that it articulates directly with the skull itself. Now, look at the snake's skull. Instead of the bones being knit compactly together, they are easily movable, being merely connected with one another by very elastic ligaments, which are capable of stretching to a great extent. In this way lateral expansion is provided for. The lower jaw is not jointed to the skull directly, but to a long movable bone, which again joins a small bone that does articulate with the skull. This arrangement forms a kind of lever which gives the snake great power of vertical expansion. Then, again, the upper and lower jaws are both movable, and the two branches of the lower jaw are not joined together, so that either side of the jaw can be worked independently of the other. The snake's teeth—which are so small that they could not harm you, even if you could irritate the creature into trying to bite—are all curved or set backwards, giving great power in holding any object.

The way in which this wonderful mechanism works is very plain. When a frog is caught, the snake being able to use either jaw, works them backwards and forwards, and as the backward-pointing teeth prevent the unfortunate frog from escaping, it is drawn by degrees down the snake's throat, the loosely set bones of the head opening to allow of its passage. Then the powerful muscles of the gullet come into play, pushing the victim still farther down, while the snake rolls about, rubbing its throat violently on the ground, to help in forcing the frog down. It is seldom that a frog when once seized is able to escape, though we have seen a very large one, which had been caught by a small snake, shake itself free after a long struggle. Sometimes, too, a snake will seize a frog which it is physically unable to swallow, and which it is forced to disgorge when half eaten; but it is almost incredible what an enormous disproportion there is between the snake and what it can and does eat. In one of the Natural History collections there is preserved a viper which had managed to swallow a very large mouse. The latter had, however, proved too large even for the expansible throat of its enemy, and the result was that the muscles of the snake's neck had been burst open, of course killing it. After making a heavy meal, a snake generally remains in a semi-torpid state for a time, and it has a curious habit of yawning or gaping immediately after eating. It requires food only once in four or five weeks, and we have had specimens which persistently refused food for three to four months at a time.

Whilst swallowing, the snake's windpipe is compressed to such an extent that it is unable to breathe. It is able also to remain for a considerable time under the surface of water without being under the necessity of coming to the top for air. To provide for these contingencies, the lungs are modified in a curious way. One lung is shrivelled and shrunken, and useless, and has, in fact, almost disappeared. The other is extended to form a long sac, or bag, of air, providing a reservoir for the snake to draw upon

when the usual mode of breathing is interfered with. It must also be remembered that reptiles respire much less than mammals do.

When in confinement, snakes usually seem to be amicably inclined towards each other; but we have witnessed many curious fights between them over their food. We have seen two of them seize the same frog at opposite ends, and fight desperately for possession of it, rolling over and over, twisting themselves into inextricable-looking knots, tugging and hauling and banging each other unmercifully against the sides of their cage, until one has managed to drag the coveted morsel away from the other. Sometimes one will begin swallowing the frog's head, while the other commences at the hind-legs. Presently they meet each other in the middle of the poor frog's body, and then there will be a dead-lock, until one can get the other's head into his mouth, and so force it to let go. On one occasion we saw *three* snakes catch hold of the same frog. The first seized it by the head, the second by the hind-leg, and the third by the side. This last was soon shaken off; and then the first quietly swallowed down the whole frog except the leg, which the other continued to hold. For a moment there was a rest; then suddenly, with a great jerk, the second snake pulled the frog right back out of his opponent's throat, and swallowed it in peace. It is rather curious to notice that as long as a frog remains motionless, a snake does not seem to care to attack it. Several times we have seen an evidently hungry snake go to a frog which was sitting quietly in a corner, and push it until it has moved, when it has been immediately seized and swallowed.

The snake's tongue is often mistaken, even by those who should know better, for a sting. Venomous serpents do not sting, but bite, as we shall explain when dealing with the viper. The tongue is long and black, forked for about one-third of its length, and nearly cylindrical. It does not lie loosely in the mouth, as the human tongue does, but is contained in a little fleshy tunnel opening out just inside the lip of the lower jaw. It is constantly flickering in and out, and seems to serve as the snake's instrument of touch. The creature does not possess eyelids, and is therefore unable to close its eyes. Whether there be any truth in the tales that are told of the snake's powers of fascinating its prey, we do not know; but certainly, when watching a snake, it fixes its eyes upon one with such a stony, persistent, unwavering gaze, that it makes one feel decidedly uncomfortable. In the absence of eyelids, there is a fine skin—a continuation of the skin of the body—covering the eyeball. Several times in the course of the year, the snake sheds its skin, coming out in a new coat of bright and handsome colours. These 'sloughs,' as the cast skins are called, are curious objects, and when perfect, are well worth preserving. In the process of removal, the snake turns them inside out, and each skin bears an exact impression of the 'scales,' as the folds in the snake's coat are generally called. For some days before casting the skin, the snake hides itself as much as possible, seeming particularly timid at such times, and the skin over the eyes becomes so

thickened as to make the creature appear to be blind.

As a pet, the snake becomes very tame, readily distinguishing its friends from strangers. It will go to the former, and coil itself up in their hands to enjoy the warmth, or will crawl up their coat sleeves and lie there until disturbed. It is fond, too, of being rubbed gently under its chin. It has no means of offence, and only two ways of defending itself. The most singular of these is the power it has of discharging from a pair of small glands in the lower part of the body an abominable, penetrating, clinging odour. When irritated or alarmed, it generally resorts to this means of defence, and no one who has ever experienced it is likely to forget it. We used to keep several snakes in a case in our bedroom, and on one occasion, when showing them to a friend, threw one of them on to the bed. Becoming alarmed, it hurried away under the blankets, giving vent to its feelings meanwhile in such a way that it was almost impossible to remain in the room all night, even with door and windows wide open. Then, too, the snake is able to erect its scales, pressing them so tightly against the sides of any hole into which it may have crept, that it is next to impossible to pull it out tail first without injuring it.

It may be well before closing to give a ready means of identifying the Grass-snake. It has quite a different appearance from the viper, but can be at once recognised by any one from the fact of its bearing two large spots of bright yellow just behind its head, and behind these two spots of black.

### DYNAMITE.

RECENT events at home and abroad have called attention to the famous explosive invented by Alfred Nobel, the renowned Swedish chemist; and the present moment is not an inopportune one to lay before our readers some succinct account of Dynamite, which has aided so largely in developing the mineral resources and mining industries of every portion of the globe. So important a position, indeed, does dynamite hold in the search for the hidden treasures of the earth, that the laws relating to it have grown into a burning political question in South Africa; and the fate of ministries threatens to hang on their attitude towards this powerful adjunct to gold-mining enterprise.

Nitro-glycerine, which is the explosive compound entering into the manufacture of dynamite, was discovered in 1846 by Ascanio Sobrero, Professor of Chemistry at Turin; but its use for many years was entirely confined to medical purposes, in which a very dilute alcoholic solution was prescribed under the name of Glonoine. Nitro-glycerine is manufactured by injecting glycerine under pressure into a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acids; a dense, oily fluid, of a pale brown colour, being thereby produced, which has a sweet, pungent taste, and causes intense headache in those

who handle it for the first time; an effect, however, which passes off in a day or two, and never returns to those continuously engaged in the industry.

Prior to the invention of dynamite, nitro-glycerine, which was conveyed in tin cases weighing about forty pounds each, was very extensively employed as a blasting agent; but numerous fearful accidents by this explosive in transport had such an effect on the public mind, that in 1869 the Nitro-glycerine Act was hurriedly passed by Parliament, which finally excluded nitro-glycerine from the market.

In connection with the dangerous nature of nitro-glycerine, it is not a little curious to note that a well-authenticated case is on record of a plumber at Rotterdam, who, unconscious of the fearful risk he was running, actually soldered a leaking tin full of nitro-glycerine, and successfully accomplished his task without being blown to atoms.

After much investigation to discover a substance which would absorb nitro-glycerine, and thereby so modify its physical condition as to render it safe in use, and after experimenting with charcoal sawdust, brick-dust, paper, rags, and numerous other materials, Alfred Nobel finally selected 'kieselguhr,' or earth-meal, as the most suitable material; and up to the present time no more serviceable absorbent has been discovered. Kieselguhr is the mineral remains of a kind of moss which grows in stagnant waters. The stem consists mainly of silica; and when the organic substance of the plant decays, the siliceous part remains, and retains the shape it had as a plant—a kind of tube. Kieselguhr generally contains a little iron, which accounts for the more or less reddish tinge noticeable in dynamite; and is found in many countries, principally Scotland, Germany, and Norway; also in the Lüneburg moors in Hanover, in the Siegen district, and in Italy.

In the first-named country, the beds of kieselguhr which form the bottoms of peat-mosses are chiefly in Aberdeenshire, the Skye deposits not being sufficiently absorbent to be of value for dynamite.

The raw kieselguhr is calcined in a special form of kiln, to drive off water and organic matter; and is subsequently ground and sifted to remove all sand, after which it is incorporated with nitro-glycerine in the proportion of one part of kieselguhr to three parts of nitro-glycerine, the resulting product being dynamite, a reddish-brown, moist, plastic earth, having a specific gravity ranging between 1.59 and 1.65.

It is not generally known that dynamite will burn without explosion if set fire to by a match or fuse. Combustion is rapid, and is accompanied by a yellowish flame, nitrous fumes being evolved. Dynamite freezes at about forty degrees Fahrenheit, and is then much less sensitive to a blow or the impact of a projectile.

The manufacture of dynamite in this country is carried out under the strictest Government

supervision, the comprehensive nature of which may be judged when it is mentioned that the Explosives Act of 1875, with subsequent amendments and additions, contains no fewer than one hundred and twenty-two sections, four schedules, two hundred and nine subsections, and eleven Orders in Council—all abounding in rules and regulations and their corresponding penalties.

Many Harbour Corporations and River Trustees have also in force very stringent orders in regard to the loading and discharging of dynamite, one body of Directors insisting on all men in the vicinity of a vessel taking dynamite wearing pocketless flannel garments; whilst horses are required to wear stout boots free from nails or iron on the soles. Though manufacturers of explosives may be inclined to deem such precautions as erring on the side of excessive caution, and as adding to the cost of the carriage of their products, the recent terrible disaster at Santander, whereby a prosperous town was reduced to ruins in a moment and fearful loss of life was occasioned, points to the wisdom of neglecting no possible safeguard in the handling of the explosive under consideration.

The enormous trade done in explosives may be inferred from the following figures: the world's output of dynamite in 1870 was reckoned to be only eleven tons; whereas, last year, no fewer than some fifteen thousand tons of nitro-glycerine compounds are computed to have been manufactured.

The principal factory in this country is that of Nobel at Ardeer, in Ayrshire, covering nearly four hundred acres, and employing between four and five hundred hands; from which the dynamite is sent out packed in parchment in cylindrical rolls by female labour. Five pounds of cartridges go to a packet; and ten packets are contained in one box, which thus holds fifty pounds of dynamite.

So rapid, however, is the march of science, especially in the production of explosives, that dynamite, which is itself quite a modern blasting agent—having been invented by Alfred Nobel some twenty-seven years ago—is being closely pressed by the new gelatinous explosives, also the product of the same master-mind. These latest inventions consist chiefly of mixtures in various proportions of nitro-glycerine and nitro-cotton, the latter being practically dissolved in the former. Both blasting gelatine and gelatine-dynamite possess the power of resisting the action of water, in conjunction with the maximum of explosive power in the minimum of bulk. The employment of the latter explosive in connection with the great Manchester Water-works supplying the city of Manchester from Lake Thirlmere, in Cumberland, and in the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal, marks it as standing the practicable test of employment by competent engineers and contractors.

Even should the more modern inventions of Alfred Nobel eventually displace in some degree the employment of dynamite, it can never be forgotten that to this explosive is due in no small degree the prosperity enjoyed in mining and engineering circles throughout the civilised

world during the past quarter of a century, by furnishing a blasting agent at once powerful, effective, and free from undue risk in transport or employment.

## SWEET LAVENDER.

WHEN summer is nearly past, and autumnal tints are just beginning to appear, the call of 'Sweetly blooming Lavender, sixteen branches a penny!' is one of the familiar street-cries of London and other of our cities. The call reminds us of the near approach of colder, darker days; but it also brings up thoughts of one of the sweetest of all floral perfumes.

The majority of those who purchase the sprigs of the little lavender plant thus offered know little of how or where they are grown, yet the cultivation of the plant is an important branch of the horticultural industry, and is specially valuable from the fact that it is carried on on land which cannot be made to support any other crop of much value. A little information about the lavender plant may be welcomed by those who have received pleasure from its sweetly perfumed sprigs and blossoms, or the fragrant volatile oil distilled from it.

The recognised species of lavender number about twenty, but only one of them is grown to any extent in this country. This is '*Lavandula vera*,' a plant about eighteen inches in height, of a shrubby habit, and producing blue flowers. It is a member of the great aromatic plant-family, '*Labiatae*,' or Lip-flower tribe, which also contains the highly odorous plants, mint, thyme, rosemary, balm, sage, and marjoram. It is a native of Southern Europe and the northern shores of Africa, where it grows in dry, stony soil, generally on mountain slopes, and has been found at an altitude of five thousand feet. It was introduced to this country in 1586, and ever since has been a favourite in our gardens. Other species of lavender are grown in France and other parts of the Continent for commercial purposes; but the oil extracted from them is not so delicately perfumed as that of '*L. vera*.' One of these, '*L. spica*,' gives the well-known Oil of Spike, which is used to prepare pigments for porcelain-painting, and varnish for artists.

The lavender plantations of this country are chiefly situated near the towns of Carshalton, Beddington, and Cheam, in the county of Surrey. In some parts of Kent also, and near Cambridge and Hitchin, there are considerable quantities of it cultivated. At the last-named town it has been grown for at least three hundred years. The town of Mitcham, in south-east Surrey, was, for about a century, famous for its lavender fields, and the excellent quality of the oil it produced, as many as three hundred acres being under cultivation at one time; but in recent years, for some reason or other, the industry has almost died out, and other districts have taken up the trade.

The plant is very easily grown. In the driest situation, the poorest soil, and the most unpromising circumstances, it finds a congenial home, and gives, with comparatively little care, a valuable crop of its fragrant blossoms. On

well-conducted lavender farms, a new plantation is formed every spring. In this way a succession of young vigorous plants is assured. The plantations are only allowed to remain four or, at most, five years, being then dug up and re-formed.

When a new plantation is to be made, the land receives a shallow ploughing. Plants are then lifted from an old plantation and divided into slips with a few roots attached to them. These slips are planted in rows eighteen inches apart, the same space being left between the plants in the rows. When two years have elapsed, the plants in every alternate row, and every alternate plant in the remaining rows, are lifted and transplanted in some other field. When this work is completed, the plants are three feet apart each way, and remain in this position till their profitable productiveness has ended.

The third, fourth, and fifth years of the life of a plantation are the most remunerative. During this period the plants are in the full vigour of their growth, and their leaves and flowers yield, in distillation, the maximum of essential oil. The land is kept scrupulously clean by the use of the hoe. This is about all the attention the plants get during the spring and early summer.

Early in August the flowers begin to develop, and the cutting and bunching of the spikes is commenced. At the first cutting, only those plants which are furnished with flowers nearly fully expanded are chosen. This rule is observed in the subsequent gatherings. A hook of a special shape is used in cutting the sprigs. This implement is narrower and more bent in the middle than the common reaping-hook.

When the bunches are intended for market in a green state, they are generally put up in bundles of a dozen bunches of one hundred and twenty spikes each. This is, as a rule, the most profitable way for the farmer to dispose of his crop. In favourable years, a healthy plant, three to five years old, will yield about fifty spikes. With five thousand plants on an acre, and one hundred and twenty spikes in a bunch, the yield per acre will be about two thousand bunches. The average price in Covent Garden market is five to six shillings per dozen bunches; so that the handsome return of forty pounds per acre is secured by the farmer. This is, of course, the bright side of the picture. Like all other cultivators of the soil, the lavender growers have their 'lean years.' A wet, sunless summer discourages vigorous growth in the plants, while producing conditions which encourage the growth of a fungus which sometimes destroys thousands of plants in a season.

The oil extracted from the lavender plant has been used as a perfume and cosmetic from time immemorial. Its extensive use by the Romans in their baths is well known, and is probably the origin of the name of the plant, from *lavare*, to wash. The species cultivated by the Romans is supposed to have been '*L. Sæchas*,' which is still common in Southern Europe.

Oil of Lavender when mixed with spirits of wine forms the popular lavender water, which as a cosmetic is unrivalled. After exposure to heat and dust, nothing produces such a delight-

ful feeling of coolness and refreshment as laving the hands and face in water containing a small quantity of lavender water. Being highly antiseptic, oil of lavender is also valuable in the sick-room.

The production of lavender for distillation is an important branch of the industry. In the county of Surrey there are several large lavender distilleries. To these the growers carry their harvestings, to be subjected to the necessary process. The oil is contained in glands situated chiefly on the calyx, corolla, and leaves, but also to a less extent on the branches and flower-stalks. In the process of distillation, two hours are allowed for the first 'run.' This run gives the clearest and best oil; and when of a very high quality, it is almost colourless. For the second run four hours are allowed, the oil produced being of a pale amber tint, and having a stronger, coarser odour than that which results from the first run. When the highest quality of oil is desired, flowers only are used in the process. The quality of the oil secured depends also on the kind of season in which the flowers have been grown. Sunless summers result in a much reduced quantity and inferior quality. There are many acres of land throughout the kingdom, producing at present only a scanty crop of grass, which might be used for the cultivation of the lavender plant. The demand for it is practically unlimited, and there is therefore little danger of its being produced in such quantities that the price would fall below a remunerative level.

#### THE NIGHTINGALE.

SOLE singer in the world of dreams,  
Whose voice, outringing clear and far  
Into the empty darkness, seems  
An echo from a distant star,

Thou comest, as God's angels will,  
When day and all its noisier mirth,  
Gone past us like a wind, are still:  
The stars in heaven and thou on earth.

Thou singest yet in all the years,  
In all the years the stars arise,  
When sleep has dulled our heedless ears  
And weighs like death upon our eyes.

And ah! outworn with sordid cares,  
We drowse in other glooms supine,  
Blind even to greater light than theirs,  
And deaf to loftier songs than thine.

But still they shine though none should see;  
And singest thou, unheard, forgot,  
Save in lone night-times, it may be,  
When they and thou shall know it not,

Their shining makes some pathway bright;  
One hears thee as he toils along,  
And passes onward through the night,  
Glad in their splendour and thy song.

A. ST J. ADcock.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Limited,  
47 Paternoster Row, LONDON; and EDINBURGH.